

UCLA Faculty Association

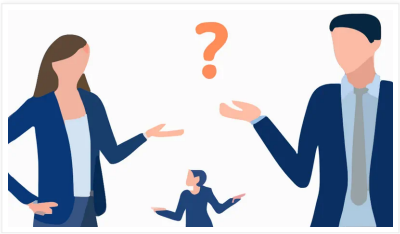
News and opinion from Dan Mitchell since 2009

Home About

Saturday, January 18, 2025

Who Is to Blame for the Fires?

I have recently noted various criticisms on social media and elsewhere on LA and California politics regarding lack of water pressure to fight the fires, policies that might have mitigated fire damage, etc. Undoubtedly, there will be investigations, reports, and commissions to examine what happened.



There has long been a fascination with the LA area as a scene of fictional or real disasters, either man-made,

<https://ia801509.us.archive.org/28/items/sacramento-city-at-risk/275-3%20Riot.mp4>

<https://ia801509.us.archive.org/28/items/sacramento-city-at-risk/A-bombLA24.mp4>

natural,

<https://ia801509.us.archive.org/28/items/sacramento-city-at-risk/earthquake.mp4>

<https://ia801509.us.archive.org/28/items/sacramento-city-at-risk/SantaMonicaTsunami.mp4>

or of supernatural/fantasy origin.

<https://ia601509.us.archive.org/28/items/sacramento-city-at-risk/battle%20LA%20volume.mp4>

<https://ia601509.us.archive.org/28/items/sacramento-city-at-risk/warofworldsLA.mp4>

<https://ia801509.us.archive.org/28/items/sacramento-city-at-risk/SHARKNADO%20-%20Official%20Asylum%20Trailer%20-%20TOO%20VIOLENT%20FOR%20TV.mp4>

Perhaps this fascination has developed because Hollywood is located here. But, whatever the reason, when real disasters happen, separating fiction from fact becomes difficult.

One of the themes that has developed is that the current wildfire disaster in LA is the product of excessive progressivism. What is often not asked is which progressivism is the culprit. Neglected is the progressivism of the early 20th century, which was quite different from the contemporary version. Among other differences, the early 20th century progressives tended to be Republicans.

The early progressives saw politics and politicians as inherently corrupt. Special interests were the source of the corruption, with the chief villain being the Southern Pacific Railroad. But with that outlook, they faced a problem of designing a system of governance that somehow avoided - or at least checked - politics and politicians. What would be the check? Who would do the governing? What kinds of institutions would be needed?

The ultimate check the old progressives came up with after the election of 1910 of Hiram Johnson as governor of California was direct democracy: the initiative, referendum, and recall. If your representatives won't pass good laws, get a petition going and put the issues on the ballot by initiative. If your representatives passed bad laws, repeal them through the referendum. And if they persisted in bad behavior, remove them via recall. An inevitable result of more use of direct democracy is a lessening of representative democracy.

Another aspect of this form of progressivism was an effort to weaken political parties. At the local level, this effort takes the form of nonpartisan elections. Candidates run as individuals, even if they carry a party label. During much of the first half of the 20th century, candidates could "cross-file," i.e., run in the primaries of political parties not their own. Earl Warren, for example, in 1946 won the nomination of both the Republican and Democratic Parties in his campaign for re-election as governor, although he was a Republican. By the 1960s, cross-filing had ended, but Governor Schwarzenegger (an explicit admirer of Hiram Johnson elected in a recall!) brought nonpartisan primaries and elections to all state elective offices (and Congress and the US Senate). Old progressivism is hardly dead in California.

California cities tend to have weak mayors or, where there are city manager systems, ceremonial mayors. Those outside observers of California with an East Coast or Midwest perspective would be amazed at what the Mayor of Los Angeles ISN'T in charge of. K-12 education? Nope! That's in the hands of a separately elected school district which includes schools outside the City. Jails? Nope. They're in the hands of a separately elected county sheriff. "Welfare"? Nope! That's in the hands of the County. Public transit. Only some. Most of it is in the hands of state-created transportation district.

The Council of UC Faculty Associations

- [Common Systemwide Calendar Workgroup](#)
- [UCSA's Letter Asking UC to Expand Commitment to Vulnerable Populations](#)
- [UC President Search Committee Statement](#)
- [Faculty File Historic Academic Freedom Unfair Labor Practice Charges Against UC](#)
- [Union Letter to UC with Benefits Demands](#)

Remaking the University

- [Liner Note 14: Michael Burawoy and the Future of Knowledge - 2/7/2025](#)
- [Why I Walked Out of the MLA for Good--And Why You Should Too \(Guest Post\) - 1/28/2025](#)
- [Highlights 11: Morons of the Master Race - 1/26/2025](#)

Higher Ed. News & Commentary

- [Chronicle of Higher Education](#)
- [Inside Higher Education](#)
- [Remaking the University](#)
- [Changing Universities](#)
- [California Professor](#)

Search This Blog

Search

UC Faculty Associations

- [UCLA Faculty Association](#)
- [UCSB Faculty Association](#)
- [UCSC Faculty Association](#)
- [UCB Faculty Association](#)
- [Council of UC Faculty Associations](#)

Other Faculty Organizations

- [American Association of University Professors](#)
- [California Faculty Association \(NEA\)](#)
- [UC-AFT](#)

Topics

[UC](#) (1912) [politics](#) (1789) [UC Regents](#) (1779) [health care](#) (1331) [State Budget](#) (1222) [governor](#) (1066) [UC budget crisis](#) (922) [UC-Berkeley](#) (859) [diversity](#) (668) [pension](#) (646) [pensions](#) (589) [tuition](#) (520) [admissions](#) (503) [athletics](#) (475) [CSU](#) (389) [transportation](#) (374) [UC-Davis](#) (365) [online education](#) (336) [ucpr](#) (295) [UCOP](#) (291) [uc retirement](#) (289) [audio](#) (288) [new hotel-conference center](#) (282) [traffic](#)

Even when things ARE in the hands of the City of Los Angeles, such as water and power, the seaport, and the airport, these services are run by quasi-autonomous entities. Old progressivism resisted putting lots of authority in the hands of any individual. And it still does.

There are in fact multiple cities in the County of Los Angeles which is run by seven elected supervisors. Indeed, the official song of the County is "76 Cities":

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-RWkG5mM7E>

The song was written back in the 1960s, in part to cheer people up after the Watts Riot. Now there are 88 cities, although no one has revised the official lyrics. Those parts of the County that are not in cities get their services (police, fire, libraries, etc.) from the County itself. And where there are cities, they come in two flavors: charter and general law. The former have more autonomy from state regulation than the latter.

The seven supervisors of the County seem powerful. But the sheriff of the County, the District Attorney, and other County officials are separately elected. As noted, the County provides services to unincorporated areas, but some cities contract with the County for certain services. For example, the City of West Hollywood gets its policing done through a contract with the County sheriff. Cities can also contract with each other for services.

Malibu, where there has been lots of fire damage, is not part of the City of LA. Part of Malibu is incorporated as a separate city. It has a city manager system with a professional manager and a ceremonial mayor drawn from one of the elected city council members. Part of Malibu is not part of the City of Malibu and is just part of LA County.

Pacific Palisades is within the City of LA. I am in Santa Monica, which is not part of the City of LA and is its own city with an elected city council and a professional city manager. But a portion of Santa Monica was part of the fire evacuation zone, although - in the end - the fire didn't reach it.

Adding to the governance complexities in California are the various water districts, some of which have independent wells but all of which depend on the Southern California Metropolitan Water District which gets water from the Colorado River and other sources thanks to a water bond back in the 1930s:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Hc6lDaWako>

LA City has a Dept. of Water and Power which is its own thing and gets water from, among other sources, the Owens Valley. The movie *Chinatown* is a highly fictionalized version of that story which took place much earlier than depicted in the movie and, unlike the movie, didn't involve incest and murder:

Owens Valley Project:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QesBtXLwvWY>

Chinatown:

<https://ia601509.us.archive.org/28/items/sacramento-city-at-risk/chinatown-short.mp4>

As a result of the film *Chinatown*, however, everything with regard to water in LA since the movie is seen as a conspiracy:

<https://ia601509.us.archive.org/28/items/sacramento-city-at-risk/874-Fictional%20water%20conspiracy%20-%20Goliath%203.mp4>

Indeed, when historian Steven Erie wrote a history of the Southern California Metropolitan Water District, he had to title it *Beyond Chinatown* (<https://www.sup.org/books/politics/beyond-chinatown>) to alert readers not to take the movie as if it were a documentary.

In any case, water policy in California, and the LA area, is made by a mix of authorities, i.e., no single entity is quite in charge, a major problem. Fire policy is also made by numerous jurisdictions including those involved in zoning. There were big fires in the past, long before California and LA were "progressive" in the modern meaning of that word. Here is Richard Nixon hosing down his house during the Bel Air fire of 1961 which threatened UCLA, just as the Palisades fire did:

<https://x.com/CalPolicy/status/1876837051691077960>

In short, under old California progressivism, as in the case of water or fire, it's often hard to say who is really in charge. There are deliberately designed layers of jurisdiction and governance with overlapping authority. So when those future wildfire investigations, reports, and commissions go looking for a culprit, they won't find just one. They are likely to find many, each of which will be able to point at the others.

Confused? You should be. That's how the system was designed over a hundred years ago when "woke" had something to do with the absence of sleep.

===

PS: The late lefty historian of LA, Mike Davis, in his *Ecology of Fear* book (1998), had a section called "The Case for Letting Malibu Burn." It would be interesting to hear from him now if he were still around. But, since he isn't around, you can read it at this link:

<https://x.com/CalPolicy/status/1877466456402657328>

Posted by California Policy Issues at [12:19 PM](#) No comments:    

Cash keeps coming (and going)

We now have the state controller's cash statement for the first half of the fiscal year. Receipts during this period to the general fund were running \$8.4 billion ahead of projections when the

(277) UC enrollment (276) enrollment (248) UC-San Diego (235) community colleges (231) LAO (214) UC-Irvine (177) fund raising (161) UC-Santa Cruz (147) UC-Santa Barbara (146) UC-San Francisco (144) controller (137) faculty center (136) ballot propositions (132) UC-Riverside (131) CalPERS (120) faculty pay (104) UC-Merced (103) Master Plan (102) Yudof (89) UCRS retirement (60) Faculty Association at UCLA (59) parking (59) privatization (59) CalSTRS (50) UC Berkeley (33) copyright (30) campus climate survey (28) UCRS (21) Michigan Model (18) UC Merced (17) uc funding (16) State Contribution (14) UCOF (14) Regents (13) faculty recruitment (12) UC pay (7) graduate education (6) UC San Diego (5) UCpolitics (3) teaching evaluation (3) UC Irvine (2) UC Santa Cruz (2)

Blog Archive

- ▼ 2025 (106)
 - ▼ February (25)
 - Demolition - Part 2
 - UCLA Anderson Forecast on Cost of Fires
 - The 15% Cap
 - Another Lawsuit - and another
 - A bit of history
 - Lawsuit
 - And now a word from yours truly...
 - Protecting the House
 - Smile
 - It's hard to keep up
 - Either it's a hack/scam or an abuse of the UCLA em...
 - Demolition
 - More Scams
 - More on Community College DEI Statements
 - Trailer Bills
 - Some Online Retirement Programs in February
 - Unclear
 - Information on Federal Research Funding
 - 2 Items for Consideration by the Senate
 - No Commercials
 - Watch the Jan. 22, 2025 morning meeting of the Reg...
 - Take Us Out of the Ball Game - Part 9 (indirect ...
 - Freezing-Unfreezing - Part 2
 - What the Regents Likely Missed
 - Two Announcements

► January (81)

- 2024 (832)
- 2023 (828)
- 2022 (719)
- 2021 (710)
- 2020 (914)
- 2019 (671)
- 2018 (595)
- 2017 (666)
- 2016 (715)
- 2015 (765)
- 2014 (704)
- 2013 (776)
- 2012 (839)
- 2011 (738)



budget was enacted. Personal income taxes and corporate taxes are the main contributors. On the other hand, disbursements are running ahead of those same projections by \$9.8 billion.

There is lots of cash in the till available to finance current spending. So there is no crisis requiring outside financing. But there is a budget squeeze. As we noted in a prior post, UC President Drake has complained about the

impact of that squeeze on UC.

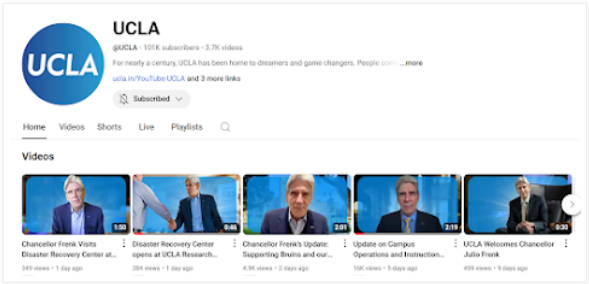
You can find the December 2024 controller's cash report at:

<https://www.sco.ca.gov/Files-ARD/CASH/December2024StatementofGeneralFundCashReceiptsandDisbursements.pdf>.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:30 AM No comments:

Labels: controller, Drake, State Budget, UC budget crisis

Chatty Chancellor



TikTok is supposed to expire somehow tomorrow, although I wouldn't count on that happening. But the idea of short little videos has caught on and can be found on other social media. Our new chancellor seems to have decided to go with the flow, as this image from UCLA's YouTube channel suggests.*

*<https://www.youtube.com/@UCLA>.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:20 AM No comments:

Labels: UCLA

Friday, January 17, 2025

Campus Arson



Source: <https://x.com/UCPDLA/status/1880302826951200881> (1-17-2025).

Posted by California Policy Issues at 12:13 PM No comments:

Labels: UCLA

Return to In-Person Instruction Next Week

- ▶ 2010 (431)
- ▶ 2009 (12)

Contributors

- ▶ California Policy Issues
- ▶ Toby Higbie
- ▶ UCLA Faculty Association



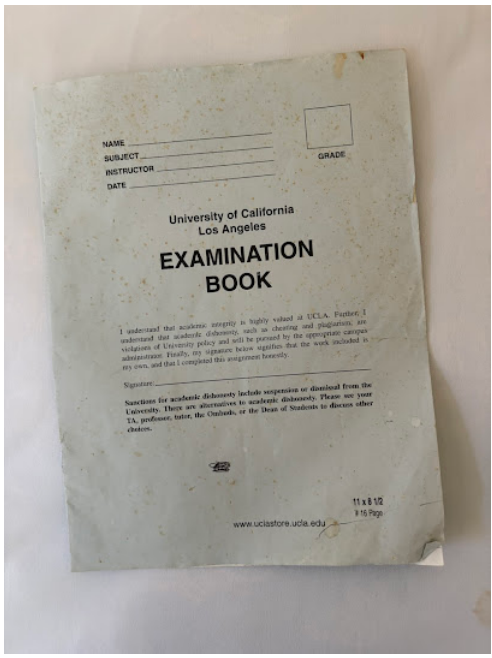
Message from the chancellor:

Source: <https://x.com/UCLAchancellor/status/1879999081701056892>
or <https://ia800105.us.archive.org/29/items/newsom-1-2-25-new-laws/UCLA%20return%20to%20in-person%20instruction%20post-fire%201-16-2025.mp4>.

Posted by California Policy Issues at [6:56 AM](#) No comments:     

Labels: [UCLA](#)

The Ultimate AI-Proof Exam Technology



Just saying...

Posted by California Policy Issues at [3:40 AM](#) No comments: 

Labels: [miscellaneous](#)

The (Dismissed) Haltigan Case

In a previous posting, this blog noted that the *Haltigan* case challenging DEI statements for new hires at UC was dismissed.* *Haltigan* was a potential faculty job applicant who challenged the requirement. Basically, he said he did not apply because the requirement violated his beliefs. The court never got to the constitutional issues and just noted he didn't have standing.



We also noted that the Regents will discuss the outcome of the case, i.e., the dismissal, at their upcoming meetings, albeit behind closed doors.**

At the time of the final dismissal, the plaintiffs (*Haltigan* and the Pacific Legal Foundation) seem not to have pursued any further appeals.

For the legal eagles, I have found the links below which outline the case, presumably what the Regents will discuss:

<https://pacificlegal.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2023-05-18-JD-Haltigan-v-michael-drake-stamped-Complaint.pdf> Original case May 18, 2023

https://scholar.google.com/scholar_case?case=10654358053559040726 Jan. 12, 2024 Order to dismiss

<https://pacificlegal.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/02.02.2024-JD-Haltigan-v.-University-of-Santa-Cruz-PLF-Second-Amended-Complaint.pdf> Amended case Feb. 2, 2024

https://scholar.google.com/scholar_case?case=5571775152297538593 Nov. 15, 2024 Final order to dismiss

===

*<https://uclafacultyassociation.blogspot.com/2024/01/dei-lawsuit-against-uc-dismissed-on.html>.

**<https://uclafacultyassociation.blogspot.com/2025/01/upcoming-regents-meeting-jan-22-23-2025.html>.

Posted by California Policy Issues at [3:30 AM](#) No comments: 

Labels: [diversity](#), [UC Regents](#)

[Newer Posts](#)

[Home](#)

[Older Posts](#)

Subscribe to: [Posts \(Atom\)](#)

Simple theme. Powered by Blogger.